

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00
IO-13 EB-08 /084 W
-----141322Z 033241 /44

O R 141150Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5776
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ROME

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TUNIS 1060

POUCHED TO ALL ARAB LEAGUE CAPITALS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2 (DATE IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE)
TAGS: PFOR TS XF
SUBJECT:TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ON MID-EAST ISSUES

REF: TUNIS 1059 (NOTAL)

1. WEARING HIS SECOND HAT AS CURRENT CHAIRMAN OF ARAB
LEAGUE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, TUNISIAN FOREIGN MINISTER
HABIB CHATTY DEVOTBED HALF OF OUR HOUR-LONG DISCUSSION
FEBRUARY 12 TO HIS OVERVIEW OF MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM AND
PROSPECTS FOR A 1977 ARESOLUTION. THIS WAS HELD FOLLOWING
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SECREOARY'S INVITATION TO CHATTY TO BRIEF ME ON HIS
OUTLOOK BEFORE UPCIOMING MEETING OF MAGHREB COM'S WITH
SECRETARY.

2. GENERAL: CHATTY BEGAN BY SAYING THAT GOT HAS BEEN
STUDYING AND ANALYZING CAREFULLY EVERY WORD PRONOUNCED
ON EVERY ASPECT OF MIDDLE EAST QUESTION BY LEADERS

OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION, PARTICULARLY YBY SECRETARY VANCE. TO DATE HSMIHE IS ENCOURAGED BY "MEASURED AND BALANCED" STATEMENTS IN WASHINGTON, ENCOURAGED BY APPARENT RECOGNITION BY ADMINISTRATION OF IMPORTANCE OF REACHING AN EARLY SETTLEMENT TO ME PROBLEM AND IMPORTANCE OF MIGOROUS US ASSUMPTION OF CATALYTIC ROLE. HELHOPES USG NOW REALIZES THAT "TIME HAS COME TO SET THE WORDS TO MUSIC".

3. SEVERAL "MUSTS": IN CHATTY'S VIEW ME SITUATION AT THIS JUNCTURE CONTAINS SEVERAL "MUSTS" FOR US. US SHOULD BE AWARE (A) THAT IT ALONE HOLDS KEY TO THE FINAL SOLUTION; (B) THAT US' MODERATE ARAB FRIENDS ARE UNITED BOTH IN A DESIARE FOR AN EARLY PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND IN THEIR WILLINGNESS TO FOLLOW US LEAD TOR REACH IT; (C) THAT US MUST WORK CLOSELY WITH THOSE ARAB STATES WHO ARE BETTING ON PEACE AND IGNORE THOUSE (CITING IRAQ ANDLLIBYA) WHO ARE BETTING AGAINST IT; (D) THAT US MUST ACCELERATE ISRAEL'S "TILT"., NOW DISCERNIBLE TO ALL ARABS, TOWARD MORE MODERATE STANCE ON PERMANENT SOLUTION AND (E) THAT US MUST USE ALL REPEAT ALL TOOLS -- INCLUDING INFLUENCE OF WE GROUP -- IN WORKING TOWARD PEACE IN ME.

4. KEY TO ARAB POSITION: IN WORKING TOWARD SOLUTION SADAT AND ASAAD WILL BE KEY ARAB ARCHITECTS. WITH THEM AND SAUDIS IN INE ALL OTHERS INCLUDIPG BULK OF PALESTINIANS WILL FOLLOW.

5. PALESTINIANS: ARABS, PARTICULARLY PLO LEADERSHIP,
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HAVE BEEN OVERJOYED THAT SECRETARY HAS MENTIONED PUBLICLY "RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS". THIS WILL SURELY SERVE TO STRENGTHEN POSITION OF ARAFAT AND IT IS IMPORTANT THAT US RECOGNIZE THAT ARAFAT TODAY SPEAKS FOR THE MODERATE REPEAT MODERATE MAJORITY OF THE PALESTINIAN LEADTYTOWP. WHIL E HIS POSITION IS INCREASINGLY PRECARIOUS HE MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE SCENE. AFTER ARAFAT WILL COME "THE EXTREMISTS WHO LISTEN ONLY TO MOSCOW". TO OBTAIN PALESTINIAN ACQUIESCENCE TO ANY EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT US MUST NEVER CONSENT TO ANY ARRANGEMENT WHICH WILL RETURN THEM TO RULE OF KING HUSSEIN. THIS THEY WILL NEVER ACCEPT. HE REALIZES THAT THIS MAY PROVE A STICKING POI NT WITH THE ISRAELIS, BUT FACE-SAVING FORMULAS (FOR BOTH HUSSEIN AND GOI) ARE POSSIBLE.WHEN HE MEETS WITH HIS ARAB OPPOSITE NUMBERS IN CAIRO BEFORE AFRO-ARAB SUMMIT IN EARLY MARCH CHATTY INTENDS TO EXPLORE FEASIBLE FORMULAS FOR CREATION OF A PALESTINIAN "ENTITY" WHICH "COULD BE PART OF A FEDERATION INCLUDING JORDAN", BUT NOT REPEAT NOT UNDER HUSSEIN'S CONTROL.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TUNIS 1060

POUCHED TO ALL ARAB LEAGUE CAPITALS

6. CALL FOR US GESTURE: WHEN I MENTIONED THAT I WAS
INTERESTED TO NOTE THAT PLO REPRESENTATIVE DR. ISSAM
SARTAWI HAS BEEN IN TUNIS AND LIONIZED FOR SEVERAL DAYS
WONDERING WHAT HE WAS UP TO, CHATTY DECLINED TO BE
SPECIFIC BUT WAXED ELOQUENT ON SARTAWI'S FINE QUALITIES.
HE WAS A MAN US SHOULD TALK TO. IN THIS CONNECTION,
FONMIN SAID, ONE OF MOST APPRECIATED GESTURES US COULD
MAKE AT SOME EARLY STAGE WOULD BE TO PERMIT OPENING
OF PLO OFFICE IN WASHINGTON UNDER ANY CONTROLS IT MIGHT
WISH TO IMPOSE. HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE INCREASINGLY
VITAL OVER COMING MONTHS TO HAVE AN AUTHORITATIVE PLO
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INTERLOCUTOR CLOSE AT HAND. SARTAWI, HE CLAIMED, COULD BE SUCH A MAN.

7. ISRAELIS AND TIME ELEMENT: TURNING TO ISRAELI FACTOR, CHATTY STATED THAT OVER LONG PERIOD OF YEARS GOI HAD TAKEN POSITION THAT TIME WAS ON ITS SIDE. HE BELIEVED THAT GOI HAD BEGUN TO HAVE DOUBTS WHETHER TIME ELEMENT WILL CONTINUE IN ITS FAVOR MUCH LONGER. HE FELT THAT LIMITS TO THIS ADMITTED TRUISM WERE ALREADY IN SIGHT. TIME WILL NOW BEGIN TO WORK AGAINST ISRAEL. ARABS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY UNITED, INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED. ARABS ARE BEGINNING TO "CATCH UP" DIPLOMATICALLY, TECHNOLOGICALLY, MILITARILY. THE PETROLEUM EMBARGO HAD TAUGHT THE ARABS THAT THEY HAVE SOME BARGAINING COUNTERS. IF 1977 PASSES WITHOUT A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION IT WILL BE ONLY INEVITABLE THAT THE ARABS WILL AGAIN STUDY USE OF THAT WEAPON. CHATTY THEN MADE A PLEA THAT US SHOULD LEAN HARD UPON GOI AND CONVINCE THEM THAT TIME WILL NOT RUN IN THEIR FAVOR MUCH LONGER.

8. KEY TO PUZZLE: BUT, PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST, CHATTY CONTINUED ALL MODERATE ARABS NOW RECOGNIZE THAT THEY CAN PLAY A ROLE IN RESOLVING THE "NEXT ESSENTIAL STEP TOWARD SOLVING THE ME PUZZLE", THAT IS, AN ENTENTE BETWEEN HUSSEIN AND PLO LEADERSHIP ON THE CHARACTER OF A PALESTINIAN STATE. THE QUESTION OF ITS EXACT BOUNDARIES IS, FOR THE MOMENT, SECONDARY. AT PRESENT HE THINKS THE PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP WILL PROVE MORE REASONABLE THAN WILL HUSSEIN. HE AND HIS ARAB LEAGUE COLLEAGUES WILL DO THEIR BEST TO WORK OUT AN UNDERSTANDING. ANYTHING THE US CAN DO TO HELP IN THIS REGARD WILL BE WELCOME.

9. ALL TOOLS NEEDED: WHEN THE NEW US ADMINISTRATION IS READY TO MOVE, CHATTY CONCLUDED, IT MUST ACT WITH ASSURANCE AND FIRMNESS. IT MUST UTILIZE ITS WHOLE
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BAG OF TRICKS. IT SHOULD NOT HESITATE TO THROW ITS EUROPEAN CARD AND ITS UN CARD INTO THE GAME. BUT US, HE HOPED, WILL KNOW THAT THE SOVIETS WILL CONTINUE TO TRY TO SABOTAGE PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT AT EVERY TURN. AS OF NOW, HOWEVER, US POSITION IS EXCELLENT AND CIRCUMSTANCE NEVER MORE PROPITIOUS. 1977 IS THE YEAR WHEN IT CAN ALL BE PUT TOGETHER.

10. IN CLOSING CHATTY WENT TO HIS DESK TO SIGN A PERSONAL LETTER TO SECRETARY VANCE WHICH HE ASKED ME TO HAND HIM AT OUR MEETING IN AMMAN. WE ALSO AGREED

TO MEET AGAIN ON FEBRUARY 22, THE DAY AFTER HIS RETURN
TO TUNIS FROM A TRIP TO PARIS.
MULCAHY

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